

with the second stormy phase of his affair with Louise Colet, who has certainly lent a good deal of her own rage for melodramatic romance to Flaubert's heroine. His

greatest work, in a word, seems to me connected with the most eventful part of his personal life. Certainly it was to Louise Colet that he addressed those fascinating letters that must perhaps rank in his production next after

*Madame Bovary*. But now he had got rid of his mistress.

His travels (except for a trip to Carthage) were over. The

hermit could settle down alone with his Muse. Did the

Muse respond? I doubt it. He produced *Salammbô*,

*l'Education Sentimentale*, the second *Saint Antoine*. Then,

in 1875, his quiet cell was shaken by an earthquake; his

niece's husband failed; and in the two following years,

amid financial ruin and business interruptions, he pro-

duced what I feel to be his second most successful creative

work, *Trois Contes*. The rest of his life was mainly em-

ployed in grinding out *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, still unfinished

when he died.

This suggested connection between Flaubert's periods

of best work and his periods of intensest experience may

indeed be really only a matter of coincidence; I should

still believe that his rejection of life was bad for his work,

and that genius seldom can be healthy for long hidden

in a hole. No doubt genius is sometimes diseased, as

ambergris is the vomit of a whale. Its

peculiar intensity  
of vision may be like the hyperaesthesia of  
some maladies;  
to cure would be to kill. But even morbid  
genius has  
usually come in contact, mosdy painful  
contact, with the  
active world. Poe or Baudelaire did not live  
in cottages.  
And if the most lasting work has been  
produced rather  
by a type of genius that was not a disease or  
an eccen-  
tricity, such as Shakespeare or Goethe, it is  
natural to  
suppose that what is good for the man is  
often good for